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OCCASIONAL PAMPHLETS BEARING ON
THE WORLD AFTER THE WAR AS
THIS APPEARS THROUGH STUDY
OF THE PAST OR CONDITIONS
OF THE PRESENT

NUMBER II

ARCHITECTURE
IN ITS RELATION TO
CIVILIZATION

By
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Architecture in Its Relation to Civilization

ART is the touchstone of history. Tradition is only measurably reliable, records and documents even less so, while written histories are apt to be the unsafest of all. Tradition is at least a living thing, though subject to curious metamorphoses, on occasion. Formal records, authentic documents, contemporary annals are but casual relics, in themselves misleading, and valuable only in the hands, not of Dr. Dryasdust with all his lore of philology, his critical acumen and his superstitious reliance on the methods of the higher criticism, but of the rare individual who is at the same time seer, philosopher and artist. As for the voluminous written histories on which all of us in our youth have been fed, and to which we remain addicted even in middle age, the major part are written for the purpose of proving some personal crotchet or predilection, or at least with the bias of individual predisposition warping them into curious shapes. Between the actual life of any time and its official documents, between the *élan vital* that controlled the individual and society, and the genealogical records, the details of dynastic and military facts, the edicts, enactments and isolated personal opinions that are still of record, a great gulf is fixed. The real man is always either better or worse than his actions, and the community of which he is a part possesses a reality that seldom finds expression in its deeds. Man is the animal that tries — but seldom succeeds, and the real man is found in his ideals and his aspirations and his struggles, rather than in his definite accomplishments.

If we would find what sort of a creature was the Greek, and what the Hellenic State, we soon turn discouraged from Grote, Duruy, Meyer, to find in the fascinating stories of Dr. Mahaffey something that is more convincing and that produces at least a human reaction to the dim and wonderful ideal that is, or should be, the heritage of every man. And yet when all is said, even Dr. Mahaffey can hardly recreate for us "the glory that was Greece," in all its fullness and poignancy; something eludes us still, the fine flavour of the Attic spirit and vivid life, and in the end we turn to the dramas, the philosophy, the sculpture and the architecture that are left to us, to the body of Greek art — for philosophy is itself a fine art — in order that we may feel Hellenism in some sense as it was. The Prometheus of Æschylus, the Antigone and Electra of Sophocles, the Bachæ and Hypolitus of Euripides; the Venus of Melos, the Hermes, the Victory of Samothrace, the supreme sculptures of the Parthenon, the Parthenon itself, the Erechtheion, the temples of Pæstum and Girgenti, yes, even the minor arts of the potter and the goldsmith, tell us far more, and with greater accuracy, what Greece stood for and tried to be, and indeed was, than all the erudite productions of the archæologists, the historian and the scholar.

So one might go on with the other great periods of history, finding in the enormous and insolent art of Rome what Gibbon could not reveal, nor Ferrero; in Hagia Sophia and St. Mark's and the splendid mosaics of a thousand churches, something in Byzantium that gives the lie to the bitter and contemptuous estimates of the civilization of the Eastern Empire that are the stock in trade of the average historian: in the Lombard art of Italy clear evidence of a strong and ardent life that otherwise we should not suspect; in the Norman abbeys and the cathedrals and sculpture and glass and metal work, the hymns and poems and romances of the Middle Ages revelation of a culture that cries shame to our own barbarism; in the architecture and painting and sculpture

and industrial arts of the early Renaissance, contrasted with the same arts of the later or Pagan Renaissance, a keen demonstration of a change for the infinitely worse that escapes the chroniclers of the period. Finally, in the arts of the present day we shall find a commentary on modern civilization that should have warned us of its inherent dangers before the cataclysm of the last four years came to drive home bitter truths we had refused to admit.

In using art as a gauge of civilization it must be borne in mind that it is a result rather than a product, and that therefore a certain difference in time exists between the impulse itself and the thing it brings into being. All civilization of a high type is immediately accompanied by artistic activity, appreciation, and desire on the part of the people as a whole. The result is industrial art of all sorts, from kitchen pottery to goldsmiths' work, and the more abstract arts of poetry and music, from folklore to religious hymns. The impulse is cumulative, and little by little the arts grow and develop; out of carving comes sculpture, out of simple construction in masonry comes the master craftsman with his schools and his cathedrals. Painters appear, and poets and musicians, and by and by a community awakes to find itself famous for its eminent artists. Then at last the curve of social development long ascending begins to decline; culture corrupts, civilization suddenly breaks down, and character degenerates. Yet for a brief period the wave of art continues to crest under the push of cumulative force, and it is at this very moment that the greatest individual artists appear, created by a society and a culture only the dregs of which remain.

This is precisely the case at the time of the Renaissance. Here we find the great painters, sculptors, poets, synchronizing with the appalling breakdown of personal and public morals, that marked the XV century in Italy. Everywhere, in fact, that the Renaissance was operative, its great and early figures in any of the arts were really

the precipitation in an alien time of forces previously engendered.

Michaelangelo and Tintoretto were as much children of the Middle Ages as were Dante, Josquin des Pres and Palastrina, Chaucer and Petrarch and Shakespeare. Mino da Fiesole and Donatello owed their very life to Mediævalism, though by their day strength had gone out of the Middle Ages, the classical revival was the fad, and the forms of their art took colour therefrom. Within a generation, however, the impetus failed; the great artists were the last of the noble line, and though this persisted it was with steadily decreasing distinction, except in music which unaccountably continued its splendid development until the very end of the last century.

Architecture alone seems to be the art that is greatest at the outset, probably because it is, after all, a communal art, the synthesis of many arts and crafts. When it becomes the highly specialized product of the intensive genius of one man, as in the XV century and again in the present century, its decline is inevitable.

I should like then to consider with you this great art of architecture as the natural and noble expression, not of individuals but of society, finding from it, if we can, some side lights on the civilization and the culture of the past. It is an art which has accompanied man very faithfully throughout the range of recorded history, clearly expressing the best of every time, never the worst, nor even the indifferent, however depraved an epoch may have been; never, that is, until the present century, and now, though the best we are finds voicing, so equally does the worst, and I am not sure that between the end of the last century and the outbreak of the war the showing given to our worst impulses and our less admirable ideals did not exceed that accorded to the best.

I shall not go back into the almost prehistoric past of Mesopotamia and Persia, of the Minoan age or that of the primitive tribes of South and Central America. For us our history begins with Greece, all before is myth

and fable, all since then a part of our inalienable heritage. With Greece came the dawn, brushing away the clouds of a shapeless, amorphous East and of black Egyptian slavery. What that was, the dim and monstrous civilization of the Nile, we see in the cruel and implacable temples, vast, insolent, tyrannical. Millions of slaves wrought these perfectly polished shafts and cut the thin lines of iron-bound capitals. Millions of slaves chiselled the prescribed and hieratic sculptures of tomb and pylon and mastaba, etched with incalculable labour in the hard basalt, granite, syenite, the endless ranks of frozen hieroglyphs. And over all and through all the implacable tyranny of an omnipotent caste, mingled of priest and king. It is the architecture of slavery and of autocracy, and like that evil union, apparently everlasting. And only apparently. The sands of desolation corrode the black basalt, the waters of the Nile are damned and, rising, submerge the vision of Philæ. Obelisks are overturned and carried as spoil to alien lands, and as Sir Thomas Browne hath it "all was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies which Cambyzes or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandize, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams."

Like the flash from the spear of Athena, or the clean, clear wind from Helicon comes the vision of Attic freedom and courage and joy of life, in the cliff-crowning temples of Hellas. In majesty and grandeur they excel the dark, petrified forests of Egypt: every line is the line of restraint and of clear-cut law, but there it was force of a Prussian mercilessness that conditioned all, here it is the power of intellectual decision. Here in Athens and Sparta man first found mind as force. The basis of the whole intellectual equipment of the world was established in this little land of great mountains and great men. Whatever we have been, are, and shall be, intellectually, goes back to Greece. Mind, exquisitely wrought like a Doric shaft or a god of Phidias, resenting

emotion or mysticism, clean-cut, supple as steel, vivid as light, creates and conditions the mythology, the philosophy, the poetry, the architecture, the sculpture of Greece. It will be a thousand years from the building of the Parthenon before this fierce intellectualism of Greece mixes with the emotionalism and the vision of the East to produce the perfected Christian philosophy and art that held for the thousand years of Byzantium and the Middle Ages. In the meantime here it asserts its supreme and individual authority, and forever after Europe will be, instinctively, the domain of intellect expressing itself through form and line, Asia the domain of emotion expressing itself through colour and light and shade. When the two blend, as they blended in Christian theology and Christian philosophy, the world will know a right balance, when they are separated, only weakness remains, to endure for a season, and then dissolve, preparatory for a new combination.

You will remember I said that great art always represents the best in a people or generation. Now the best in Greece was its clear-cut intellectualism, its ideal of self-control and of righteous action through intellectual force, and this quality shines through every architectural fragment that remains. Naturally the Greek ideal was seldom achieved by individuals, perhaps never by communities; human passion blurred the clear lines of theory, human instincts increasingly rose superior to the mental barriers so explicitly laid down. The incomparable perfection of the Parthenon, where every line, proportion, form was wrought out under an almost divine self-control, is the incarnation of an ideal, not the manifestation of either social or individual achievement. There never was such a thing as a republic in Athens, or anywhere else; cruelty and falsehood and trickery were as common there and then as here and now, yet the ideal was very real, the effort correspondingly intense, and it is effort that counts.

From the massive and almost primitive temples of

Pæstum through the Doric of Athens to the airy Ionic of the Erechtheion runs the passion for perfection, the worship of law, the sense of abounding life under serene restraint. Every curve is parabolic, the curve of steel under stress, of a bent rapier. The round, fat leaden line of the Renaissance "curve of beauty" was loathsome to the Greek, for it was dead; the swift, springing contour of a column entasis or an echinus, was a line instinct with life and so it expresses the Hellenic ideal. The same thing is visible in every bit of sculpture that remains to us; there is not a line in a Greek statue that has not the curve of living steel, supple, sweeping, vivid with life. And over and through it all are the repose and serene restraint of supreme law.

When we turn to Rome a very different thing confronts us. Here is law indeed, but now it is no longer the force of will but the will of force. The Roman architecture we have is that of Imperialism, and here the liberty the Greeks asserted for all but slaves has been taken away from the great mass of citizens. Under any imperialism, whether that of the first or of the XIX century A.D., whether of government or industry or finance, liberty is mortgaged to efficiency. Rome was power incarnate: power that swept away all localism, all individuality. The temples and fora, baths and theatres, shops and villas of the imperial city were duplicated in Africa, Syria, Dalmatia, Gaul, Britain, Timgad, lost in the drifting African sands, Baalbec in the far lands beyond the Lebanon, Marseilles, Treves, the lost cities of Britain, were all Romes in miniature, and their great architectural monuments were run in the same mould, and even rivalled the vast wonders of the mother city.

Everywhere power, insolent in its security, indomitable in its efficiency, and clothed in the gorgeous trappings of the decadent art of exiled Greeks, bought and paid for, and made tributary to ignorant wealth and magnificent capacity. The authority of power commands, ingenuous engineers devise the plans, the Cyclopean walls

and piers, the enormous arches and cavernous vaults and wide domes; artists of an elder culture, now dead, arrange the sheets of precious marbles from the four corners of the earth, array the jewel-columns of jasper, serpentine, and every high-coloured and costly stone to be found in the empire; scheme out the sheeted mosaics and the tessellated pavements, and plate the bronze and copper with beaten gold. And the fabulous cost is furnished by slaves and conquered peoples. Statues of marble and bronze and gold outnumber the citizens; temples crown every height and are treasure houses of gorgeous spoils; baths reach out over acres, palaces with their gardens cover the area of a town; circuses and theatres hold the population of a city, and triumphal arches and votive columns proclaim unending military triumphs and a pride that reaches the stars.

Now the marbles and mosaics are gone, the statues burned into lime, or melted into bullion to pay the tribute of barbarian conquerors. In less than an hundred years the power became as nothing, the glory departed, and wolves roamed at will around the forsaken Forum and through the echoing halls of the Palace of the Caesars. A thousand years of ever-increasing wealth and power went for nothing in the century of the Teutonic invasions.

Yet in the gaunt masses of indissoluble masonry grandeur still lingers, and the magic of the Roman name is everlasting. Out into the wild lands of Dacia and Belgica, Gaul, Britain and Lusitania, went the power and the law and the pride of Rome, and civilization became their part when paganism was transmuted by Christianity. Rome perished but the Roman inheritance remains.

So do not its monuments, except as appalling ruins or as naked fragments from which the sheeted splendour has been torn away. For fifteen centuries the destruction has continued: Goths and Huns and Lombards; the stern Christians of the Dark Ages, Eastern Em-

perors, Saracen hordes, Mediæval clans, the amateurs of the Renaissance, and over all and through all, time and wind and weather have waged merciless war against magnificence, and have won the victory. No great temple remains, only decimated ranks of great columns, with a portico here, a massive foundation there; or more likely only a dim tradition of what was once a wonder of the world. The public baths that were the pride, and the bribe, of emperors are now no more than shapeless crags after having served forty generations as stone quarries. Amphitheatres lift defying walls after their seats and statues and colonnades have vanished, and triumphal arches, battered and half-buried, outlive the memory of the victories they celebrate. Of the myriad palaces and villas with their gardens and lakes and terraces, not even a vestige remains, and whole cities have vanished, as Carthage and Alexandria and Antioch have become only a legend enshrined in the sordid shell of modern cities. What they were, these magnificent monuments of secular magnificence, we can now only imagine, and in the imagining our own ugly creations give us no aid.

And while Rome was living its last years of blind pride and then corrupting in slow death, a strange thing was happening. In the East, in Egypt and Syria and Asia Minor, Rome was submitting to a kind of new Hellenism. Here the Greeks were predominant and they took over all that came to them from the banks of the Tiber and began to infuse it with Hellenic quality. It was not very pure or very classical but it was more Greek than Roman, and in Syria imperial officialism began to yield to Greek vitality. Very slowly the local architecture changed, and the moving causes were: this curious Greek spirit, Christianity, and elements of orientalism from Persia and Mesopotamia. Now first the dome begins to show itself as a conditioning force in architecture, while the dull carving of later Rome becomes crisp and brilliant like the old work of Greece. With the definite removal

of the capital from Rome to Byzantium the transformation becomes more rapid, only now it is Asia Minor where the process is being carried out.

This new art, forever to be known as Byzantine, was the first perfect union of form and colour, of the severed qualities of East and West, and naturally, even inevitably, Christianity as a religion was the first and final incorporation of intellect and spirit, of matter redeemed and of spirit incarnate in matter, and for five centuries it had been working out a similar philosophy. Now at last Christianity had dominion over society, paganism was dead, and the sumptuous Constantinople capital of Christendom. Here came into being the first genuine Christian art; all before, in Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, had been a thinly veiled or indifferently adapted paganism. The elements were, first, a Roman system transmuted and revitalized by Hellenism, and with logic and the organic sense taking the place of imperial formalism; second, the Persian contribution of the dome as a structural feature and implying a centralized scheme in place of the extended forms of Rome; third, the passionate colour of orientalism with its gorgeous materials. Form and colour met together under the control of Greek vitality and logic.

If we were to judge the culture of the Eastern Empire from the commentaries of historians we should find it cruel, luxurious, profligate, and riotous with rebellion and assassination. All these qualities existed, undoubtedly, but on the other hand was a passionate popular interest in theology and philosophy, an absorbing religious devotion, great saints contending with great sinners and heresiarchs and — eight centuries of sublime art along a dozen different lines. Enamels, ivory carvings, jewels, goldsmiths' work, embroideries, woven stuffs; miniature painting and illuminations that were the basis of all the later painting of Italy; mosaics of supreme beauty, and architecture that reached its climax, though not its end, in Hagia Sophia, then as

now one of the wonders of the world. Never had there been such a church, nor will there ever be again. A masterpiece of architecture, dome and arch used with pure logic and in obedience to almost divine inspiration. Rank on rank are enormous columns of priceless marbles, the walls are of sheeted jasper, alabaster, chalcedony, and the domes and vaults wrapped round with gold mosaic. Until the Ottoman Turks rode on their war horses fetlock deep in blood into the great church after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, it was crowded with altars, shrines, screens and thrones of silver and solid gold set with jewels. Now all this is gone, wrecked and stolen by the Mohammedan conquerors, and the great gold case is almost empty, its mosaic figures of Christ and our Lady and the saints smeared with whitewash, and alien prayer desks and pulpits of Cairene work are set around at strange angles. Shall we ourselves see the day when these impedimenta are abolished, a great altar raised again in the sanctuary, the crescent replaced by the cross, and Mass is said again in the greatest church in Christendom after five hundred years? Perhaps.

Meanwhile it stands as the greatest record of a complicated civilization; cruel yet devout, profoundly philosophical yet oriental in its gorgeousness and luxury; an eastern despotism tempered by a Greek passion for liberty that only too often became anarchy; a bedlam of internecine quarrels that did not prevent the most heroic warfare for a thousand years against Persians and African vandals and the barbarian hordes roaring into Italy; against Huns and Avars, Serbs and Bulgars, and all the Mussulman tribes out of Arabia and the wilderness beyond the Caspian Sea. For a thousand years Byzantium stood as the defence of Christian Europe against the heathen East, and when she fell at last the Mohammedan tide washed up to the walls of Vienna on the one hand, across the width of Africa, through Spain, and almost to the gates of Paris on the other, while Sicily and lower Italy were lost, Rome

threatened, and even Christianity itself put in peril of its life.

Something of this great quality of pride, magnificence and devotion, shows in Byzantine art, and the art does justice where history does only injustice. For those who cannot go to Constantinople, Venice still gives some idea of an art very aloof from that of the West with which we are most familiar, for Venice was always an outpost of the East even when all the rest of Europe was black with barbarism, and Venice is also the channel through which flowed into the barbarian states of the Dark Ages, something of the artistic philosophy that had achieved its first perfection in Byzantium. St. Mark's is still the most perfect Byzantine interior in existence, and the heart fails at the thought of what may happen if the Italian lines break and Venetia is abandoned to the line of the Adige. The church is a close reproduction of that of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, long since destroyed by the Turks, and a type of scores of others that once existed in Trebizond, Anatolia, Thrace, Thessaly, Greece, and in and about Constantinople itself. It is an art of colour and chiaroscuro primarily, though its Greek perfection of form shows in every part. Line, however, is quite subordinated to the mobile magic of gold mosaic that is wrapped around the vaults and domes like an iridescent garment. In Sicily also, in that almost fabulous XII century of culture and poetry and refinement, when Norman kings held court with their Greek and Jewish and Mussulman subjects in a strange fraternity, we find something of the same Byzantine splendour. Here in King Roger's royal chapel, the only surviving element of the palace that is fabled to have been a vision out of the "Arabian Nights," is the same dusk of lambent gold, and shafts of purple marble, and wall veiling of porphyry and alabaster and flickering glass mosaic. Monreale also, vast and very much restored, strikes the same note, but in both we find, as we do not in Venice, Norman and Arabic elements mixing with

Roman memories and the superb competence of Byzantium. We think of the early XII century as vigorous and active but as barbarous at best, yet here in Palermo, and in Venice a century earlier, we find art of all sorts that predicates a culture and refinement of which we know nothing today, and when we dip deeper into the real history of the time, — lo, it is there; a society highly organized, delicate in its cultivation, redolent of poetry and romance, rich with learning and all the refinements of a high and sunny civilization. It grew out of the night of the Dark Ages and it vanished in the night of the Renaissance, but while it lasted it was a thing of beauty, and the first hint of this comes to us, not from history, not from documents, but from the art it produced.

Through this sequence we have been dealing with races of Mediterranean blood, Athens, Rome, Byzantium, Venice, Palermo, but already a new thing had placed its mark on Europe and on history, claiming them now for its own. The day of the southern peoples has declined towards a night of a thousand years, and the new day that came to its stormy dawn when the barbarian tribes burst the ramparts of the Alps and bridged the broad moats of Danube and Rhine, is the day of the North. After all the Hellens and the Latin had achieved their triumph. Weariness and lassitude came after defeat, and degeneration followed close behind. The fierce blood of the Baltic tribes was clean and pure, and it revived an old Europe when once injected into its hardening veins. It took five centuries to civilize the Goths and the Teutons who devastated north Italy and then camped in the wilderness they had made, though fifty years were enough to transform the Vikings, who had come to the Norman coasts and threaded the French rivers in their long ships, from savage marauders into the greatest moral force in Europe. When this new vigour began to work itself out in social organization and in artistic expression, a new thing appeared, utterly unlike

anything seen before, yet curiously based on the principles established by Greece, Rome and Byzantium, and destined to fruition in that Gothic architecture that is the full and final expression of Catholic religion, sacramental philosophy, and that original and definite social system that is the product of Christianity working on Northern blood under the impulse of monasticism.

After the memory of imperial Rome, and compared with the glory of the Byzantium of Justinian, the first efforts at recovery were as crude and savage as one would expect from the time and the race. Rough stone-built barns heaped up of pilfered fragments from old ruins gave scant promise of Pisa, Modena and Caen, and far less of Amiens, Westminster and Cologne. Life was crescent, however, and it was not long before Sant 'Ambrogio showed the line of development in its vital organic scheme, while all over Italy great churches were followed by greater still, and all covered increasingly with a new and vivid type of ornament where the old Byzantine or Syrian memory fast disappeared as the northern imagination came into play. There is an amazing variety and vitality in this Lombard work of North Italy, with its fantastic arcades, its doorways where the columns are perched on the backs of carved beasts, its inlays and knotted ornament, and its sharp black and white carving where the wild things of the forest twine themselves in the midst of saints and apocalyptic beasts and the leaves and flowers of everyday gardens. Spontaneous, unconventional, humorous, sometimes to the point of ribaldry, it is sheer animal spirits beyond control and overflowing on every available piece of building stone. Of course there was a passing opposition in the shape of the surviving classical elements in Tuscany, and San Miniato, the Baptisteries of Florence and Pisa, and in a sense Pisa itself, tried to be more circumspect and deliberately traditional. It did not last. The North was in the saddle, and to the North the torch was transferred, to Normandy in point of fact, where already the

fierce Vikings had become thoroughly acclimated and had begun their consistent scheme of conquering the world piecemeal and by their individual prowess.

As far back as 927 St. Odo had begun at Cluny that great monastic reform that was the prime instrument in breaking the Dark Ages and bringing in the new era of Christian civilization we call Mediævalism. For some reason or other this potent influence from Burgundy exerted its greatest pressure in Normandy, and by the middle of the XI century had made it the greatest moral force, and the most aggressive, in Christendom. They had brought no architecture with them, nor any hint of art, these bold buccaneers from the cold Baltic, but the incentive came to them from the South, from Lombardy, for Bishop William of Volpiano had come into Gaul on missionary enterprise, bringing with him, perhaps, a few masons and statuaries from north Italy. Anyway he built St. Benigne at Dijon (wholly destroyed by the French revolutionists) and then went on to Normandy. At once things began to happen with some expedition: between the year 1000 and that of the sailing of the Conqueror, twenty great monasteries for men and six for women were built, in addition to the three immortal centres of energy, piety, and culture, Bec, Fécamp and Jumièges. Abbot William came in 992 and set to work with a will, though of his earliest buildings nothing remains. Bernay, a rough little structure of 1013 is still preserved, though desecrated, and Jumièges, which was begun in 1040, stands as the first significant architectural monument. Here we find certain architectural peculiarities that indicate Lombardy, but there is much else and that much is Norman. It is a calamity that the Revolution blew the great church to pieces with gunpowder simply because it *was* a church, for it was one of the most significant structures in France and the first in the stage that leads to the great abbeys of Duke William in Caen, and so to St. Denis and all the wonders of the Middle Ages. So far as France is

concerned, it is these same anarchists of the Revolution who destroyed more great architecture than all the wars and invasions, and who find their rivals only amongst the Huns of today.

Immediately came Boscheville and Cerisy le Forêt, and then the two abbeys of Caen which show the Normans at their best, and after their most characteristic fashion. Here is vast stability, powerful massing, ambitious length and breadth and height. There are no new structural ideas, and carved ornament is lacking, but the vigour is unmistakable, while the vast dimensions indicate the strength and universality of the contemporary religious sense. The Normans were never inventive, and logic was not their strong point; what might have been had they retained the whip hand a century longer we cannot say. As a matter of fact, we realize from its architecture that by the end of the XI century Normandy must have ceased to be a power, for building had practically stopped, and beyond Caen no particular progress is visible. Not long after the death of the Conqueror came evil times, war, disorder, religious and educational retrogression, and not until the duchy was conquered and added to France was there any improvement. England and France now took the place of Normandy, both crescent states, and in the first we find the development of that originality in design, poetry of spirit, and beauty in ornament Normandy could not achieve, in the second — that amazing little "Île de France" — the working of pure logic in structural organism, the development of Gothic structure, latent in Norman work but never availed of.

From a religious point of view Normandy had always been curiously monastic; it never liked the Pope and was jealous of Roman influence. William and his successors in England were always in trouble with the head of the Church, but the monks they adored. The first churches in England after the Conquest were gigantic monasteries of the Benedictine order and Cluniac rule, the

largest churches in the world and fabulous in number. Here, under the impulse given by Lanfranc of Bec (as ardent a builder as Justinian), came the utmost development of the Norman Romanesque, at Canterbury first, then at Winchester, Peterborough, Ely, St. Albans, Norwich, Whitby, Durham, Beaulieu, Rievaulx, and endless other places where now remains only a ruin or a memory. It was a magnificent and princely succession, vast, vigorous and original, with all kinds of new fancies working themselves out in design, though the structure remained ponderous, inarticulated, static. Wealth poured in to the monasteries and their gorgeousness increased accordingly. In a little every building was enriched with the most opulent carving until the cost in money and labour became fabulous. Precisely the same thing occurred in Anjou, Guienne, Toulouse, and here in the south or west of what is now France, the severe and magisterial quality of Normandy gave place to the utmost sumptuousness of decoration and a passion for architecture as pure beauty. In a sense the Cluniac reform had failed, at least it had not continued long enough to place society on a solid foundation, therefore a second monastic reform was necessary, and this was supplied through the new Cistercian order which, coming also from Burgundy, chose the central Kingdom of France as its field of operations.

Architecturally we find an instantaneous change. The general scheme of the Norman church is accepted, and in this lies much of the Gothic idea, but the structural system is completely revolutionized and this is followed by an equal change in the spirit and the forms of decoration. St. Leu d'Esserent was begun in 1125, St. Denis in 1140 (just a century after Jumièges), and in that astonishing fifteen years the static, inorganic Norman has become the vital, highly organized Gothic. Twenty years later the Cathedral of Our Lady of Paris is begun, and in the same XII century we get Noyon, Laon, Senlis, Bourges, Chartres. Now at St. Germer

de Fly, about 1130, we find the beginnings of a true Gothic organism; this was carried a degree further at St. Denis, further still at Noyon, and in Notre Dame and Laon it reaches completeness, if it still lacks the supreme refinements of Amiens and Reims. What has happened? In a word the abandonment of a system depending on bulk, massiveness, and weight, for one where thrusts are opposed by counter-thrusts, masses are diminished by half, a drastic economy is effected, and life, movement, action are embodied in the perfectly organic fabric.

Of course what had happened was that the Cistercian reformers would have no more of the sumptuous ponderousness of the haughty Benedictine work, and they demanded a more economical style where applied science took the place of gigantic immobility. They got it. A Gothic church is the most living of all man's creations, for it is as perfectly organized and articulated as a human body. So wonderful is it in its exact science, it has obsessed many men with the idea that it is the system alone that can claim the name "Gothic," that where we do not find concentrated loads, ceilings of masonry in the form of pointed, ribbed and stilted vaults, and a full scheme of thrusts met by counter-thrusts, with the lines of pressure conducted to earth through buttresses and flying buttresses, then whatever else we discover, we do not find Gothic. This is nonsense. Gothic simply means the artistic expression of Mediævalism, and the structural scheme is merely one element out of many in the single art of architecture. During this period of exactly five centuries architecture was the chosen and the chiefest art, not only the most highly developed in itself, but combining all the others with it in a great unity. Just as mass under ideal conditions is the perfect synthesis of all the arts, so is a cathedral or abbey or church in the Middle Ages. Here come together painting, sculpture and all the minor arts, under the dominion of, and mingling with, architecture, while

the liturgy adds music, poetry and drama. To the man of the Middle Ages all the arts were in a sense divine, beauty sacrificial, and the whole body of art sacramental, therefore he made his church the perfection of material beauty, his worship both expressive and evocative through artistic ceremonial, and around this church and through this worship he built up the unity of his own life. What are the characteristics of Gothic architecture? They are: perfect organism and proximate vitality through balance and proportion; beauty sought for persistently and infused into every part; material things glorified by the transforming power of a spiritual idea; community of interest obtained through the co-operation of groups of men bound in guilds; infinite liberty made both safe and free under law.

And these are exactly the salient qualities of Mediæval civilization, separating it completely from all that went before and all that followed after, and making it the nearest approach to the Christian Commonwealth man has thus far achieved.

Consider a few of the great works of art of the Middle Ages and see how in each we find the qualities that mark the greatest and the most misunderstood period in history. We can find these wonders of man in every country: England, the Rhineland, Flanders, Italy, Spain, but chiefly in France, and these clustering closely around that "Royaume" of Paris and the Île de France which was then the centre of world-civilization. Within a few years of St. Denis comes Paris, growing swiftly from East to West; very organic, magisterial and secure, the work of men of assured competence and conscious ability. In the great west front is a monument of classical balance and restraint, fired by a noble devotion, that ranks amongst the half-dozen greatest works of man. Even the Greeks never produced anything more magisterial than this, but here we find an individuality and vivid emotionalism absent from Hellenic work. Laon is of the same date, and in its complete

diversity shows well how personal was this XII century building even though the system was practically invariable. The rectangular choir of Laon is a later development and no part of the original scheme, the seven towers however, some of which still remain, were generally planned, though seldom if ever carried out. Bourges is even a further variant, without transepts, and boasting an interior order novel and singularly beautiful; here the arcade of the middle of the five aisles is tall enough to comprehend both arcade and clerestory of the flanking aisles, and the resulting airiness and grace are unique. In Amiens and Reims the zenith of perfection is reached and in the former the line is overstepped, for now the pride of mastery inspires men and they dare anything, paring down their wall and pier sections, cutting out stone to substitute walls of iridescent glass, lifting their dizzy vaults to improbable heights and catching the swift thrust of close-curved arches by slim scaffoldings of chiselled stone. The next step was into catastrophe, for Beauvais went beyond daring to the foolhardy, and promptly collapsed. Rebuilt with humiliating reinforcements it again burst asunder under the mad pinnacle of a central spire five hundred feet high, and now it stands, truncated and unfinished, a symbol of retribution, and a warning that after all man has his limitations. Not, apparently, in ornament, for these transept ends of Beauvais, together with the west front of Amiens, admit neither limitation nor control. The solid richness of Amiens, carved like a great and royal jewel, gives place here to airy lace-work of fretted stone, a monstrous fabric as perfect in line and composition as it is in fanciful imagination. This is what French Gothic came to in the end, in its century of flamboyant grace and fantasy, after the English wars had ruined the land and laid it waste, leaving a whole people desolate and afflicted, with nothing on which they could fall back except sheer beauty and a life of reckless gaiety and pageantry. With recovery

wealth began to increase, while faith decayed as the coming Reformation cast its shadow before in the shape of the Renaissance, therefore we find a sudden outburst of secular building that in a few years is to absorb the activity of all Europe, to the exclusion of that religious building that had marked the preceding centuries since the millennial year 1000.

This secular architecture of *hôtels de villes* and guild halls, castles and palaces and town mansions, is the architectural mark of the XV century, and it sets the stamp of pride and wealth and fine manners on the closing century of a Mediævalism that already had abandoned its sincerity and integrity and had turned to material things in its new quest, then just beginning and destined to another five centuries that were to reach their turn in this XX century and in the midst of an outbreak of savagery, dishonour, perjury and insolent brutality unmatched in the history of the world. Our own era may be said to begin with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and it will end sometime before 1953, when and how, who shall say? The process of destruction has begun but the issue none can forecast. All we know is that it will parallel the breakdown of Hellenic civilization, of the Roman Empire, of the era of the Dark Ages, the age of Mediævalism, and that now, as then, all that has been for five hundred years will cease and something quite new will take its place.

In the communal life of the true Middle Ages, the church, the abbey, the guild was the centre of life, and men lived modestly, if not indeed ignominiously, in little houses of small distinction and less convenience. Even the castle of the prince was more a fortress than a dwelling and the lords of the manor boasted of quarters differing little from those of their feudatories. That the great castles were majestic and terrifying we know from their blasted ruins, as for example Coucy which until last year stood in its indomitable pride, century after century, only to be blown up at last by the Huns

in their rage and their blind savagery. Later, when feudal warfare (which after all had much to commend it) fell into disuse, the castle blossomed into an almost magical beauty, crowning its wood-encircled rock in the midst of black forests in the Rhineland or the valley of the Moselle or along the reaches of the Danube, or rising from the circle of its orchards and its pleasance on the banks of some sweet, slow-moving river like the Loire or the Marne or the Scheldt, or from the wide fields of England. They were all as perfect art as the abbeys and the cathedrals, and one would like well to see again in vision Anjou or Brabant or the marches of Wales as these were in the XVI century before the holocaust of the Reformation, when the whole land was rich with innumerable monasteries with their great churches, and the countryside flashed with the tall castles and châteaux and manors of the nobility; when there were no industrial suburbs to sordid towns, no railroads and automobiles, and the highways were gay with knights and ladies, huntsmen and pilgrims, merchants with trains of attendants, troubadours, questing chivalry, and a king now and then, or bishop or mitred abbot on princely progress from one tall town to another. What were they, these mysterious cities of Flanders and Champagne, Lombardy and Sicily and the Rhine, that played so great a part in history and are now transmuted by coal and iron and steam into grim places of great torment? We could guess perhaps from the faded roseleaf palaces of Venice above their emerald canals; from the carved and painted and gilded mansions of Hildesheim and Ypres and Arras; from the sleepy alleys of the magical city of Bruges, dreaming of its old days of pride and arrogance and the joy of life, but not of the days to come when savages out of a far heathendom on the bleak shores of the Baltic would turn its lazy canals and its deserted market place into a place of war, and from enemy navies in the sky hell would be rained down to devastate and to destroy. They are all gone, these

dream cities as things perfect and complete, and the fragments that remain, interspersed with the dull stupidity of the XVIII century, and the gross and tawdry barbarism of the XIX century, may very well pass in this war for even now Ypres and Arras have gone and Venice and Bruges may follow suit. Meanwhile let us remember them as the showing forth of an architecture that proves in the teeth of historians, a civilization and a culture and a personal and communal character of the highest order to which man can attain.

Of course much of it — the art I mean — runs well into the period of the Renaissance. These châteaux of France and palaces of Venice and cities of Flanders and manor houses and little villages of England are, as we have known them, even more of the XVI century than of the XV, and hardly at all of the XIII century. The Renaissance however is a curious and fluid period, sweeping on here and holding back there, leaving still eddies in other places, while even where it is pushing on in one direction in some place, it is leaving other domains of thought and action almost untouched. The good that was built up in Europe between the year 1000 and the year 1300 was possessed of a momentum that carried it on even when the primal force was spent. Society crumbled under the Renaissance in Italy first of all but France resisted it for many years, the Low Countries still longer, and Spain, while England held out longest of all, and it was not until the reign of Henry VIII that it gained its final control. What we call the Early Renaissance was a fascinating and a beautiful thing, in Venice, Siena, Florence; in France of the time of Francis I, in Flanders while Margaret of Malines was regent, in England up to the suppression of the monasteries. We see this in the art of the time, and in the poetry and romances; in the legends and records and stories that have lived until now. All the architecture of Italy in the cinquecento is blossoming into infinite grace and delicacy, as in Bramante's Sant Andrea in

Mantua, so faultless in its finesse and in its delicate artistry. So also in Venice when the Lombardi were building fairy palaces and churches like cameos cut out of pale marble and carved like a great jewel, with their walls set with slabs of precious marbles and their roofs of azure damascened with gold. It is at this time that England is creating her own almost national style, absurdly called "Perpendicular," where to a singular logic in organism is added all the blazing panoply of chivalry, the inlays and carvings and sculptures in alabaster of the Italian craftsmen, the palpitating colour of stained glass, the lordly extravagance of great wealth and the sheer joy in life of a people content with their good fortune and careless of things to come. It was then that Gloucester cathedral was made over into a fantasy of delicate embroidery and its Lady Chapel wrought out of the poetic fancy of some unknown genius. It was then that the Chapel of Henry VII at Westminster was built and roofed by the incredible fans of its circling vaults in defiance of logic but in obedience to the passionate poetry of the people. It was all a kind of daydream and too beautiful to last. What Henry did in material destruction of the matchless monuments of English monasticism and of their hoarded treasures of art is symbolical of what was happening in the realms of ideals and of modes of life. As the great abbeys were sacked and sold for building stone or blown up by gunpowder until all England was one vast graveyard of murdered art, so the Christian ideal of Mediævalism was being broken down that a new paganism might take its place, and when it came, as in the end it came everywhere, the art it brought in its wake and used for its own intimate expression, was of like nature with itself. It was not a popular art either in the sense of being the spontaneous creation of a whole people, as was the art of Greece and Byzantium and the Middle Ages, or in the sense that it was received with satisfaction. It was rather a synthetic product scientifically

built up by a few clever men who deliberately determined on producing something quite new, as the cubists and post-impressionists and vers-librists did a few years ago. This was of course quite logical and right; neither the Renaissance nor the Reformation was the result of a great popular uprising, both were invented, perfected and popularized by a few extremely clever men, and the old art would have been absurd as an exponent of the new régime. There had to be a new art, so the amateurs made one and it fitted the case admirably. Alberti and Mino da Fiesole and Leonardo da Vinci were still working under the impulse of Mediaevalism, and they had to go, their places being taken by Palladio and Bernini and Rubens and all the myriad numbers of their tribe who at least could express the new paganism to perfection. At once all sense of structural logic is lost, all honesty in the use of materials, all co-operation of craftsmen of many sorts. Beauty surrenders to the sensational and the gross; good taste yields to the flamboyant and the bizarre. Vulgarity reigns supreme and art becomes a coarse jest. Effective often, as such things are whether in painting or in journalism, with a certain riotous exuberance and misguided fecundity that breed facile admiration. All Europe burst into a sort of grotesque masquerade and impudent mockery of culture, mixed with a joyful immorality that surged onward without let or hindrance. And then the fire burned itself out, satiety followed excess, and as society settled down in its old age to the agreeable and single pursuit of money as the direct road to power of every kind, the whole thing froze into the smug respectability of the XIX century.

Thither I shall not follow it with you to whom it must already be sufficiently familiar. I have neither time nor inclination to deal in detail with the artificial products of the Renaissance from Palladio to Louis Napoleon, though this is not because this self-conscious product was always either ugly or not worth study, or because

it was not an exact expression of the time. It was frequently very beautiful in a high-brow, autocratic sort of way, and, at least from the time of Louis XVI, marked by great intelligence on the part of its inventors. It voiced the people and the time quite as exactly as did the art of Greece or that of Mediævalism, and I dare say if you examine appreciatively the building of the Jesuits in Italy, the court architects of Louis XIV and Napoleon III, of the Margraves of Germany, of the Reformation society of England, you will gain what is after all a much more just idea of the culture and the moral qualities of this period, than any you could gather from authentic histories.

A complete revolution had been effected in life. Macchiavelli and Mather Luther had invented and justified and popularized autocratic government, so destroying the old Mediæval democracy. The Renaissance had extinguished the ancient moral order, bringing in a new profligacy in manners and life. Both together had cut society in halves, lifting a minority ever higher, depressing a majority ever to lower depths and a less honourable status. When the various revolutions came in a desperate effort to reverse the course of the new power and effect a return to an earlier, a freer, and more righteous form of life, there was neither a vital and unified religion, nor a constructive philosophy to help organize the victories, while leadership fell into the hands of those raised up out of poverty, ignorance and a degraded social order, with the result that the real victory was sacrificed, and doctrinaire systems, both unintelligent and inefficient, took its place. Presently came the counter-revolution in the shape of industrialism, when the whole scheme fell helplessly into the hands of the new autocracy of capitalism, which extinguished all but the name and the now harmless machines of liberalism, deepened still further the gulf between the two original divisions of society, and created a third, the industrial bourgeoisie, which had neither tradition nor creative

intelligence, nor potent character, but did possess acquisitive capacity, and ultimately established its standards over both the old sectors of a divided society.

In this process, which lasted in all its phases from the beginning of the XV to the end of the XIX century, the old art slowly died away. It had always been an art of all the people, precipitated and glorified by those supreme geniuses raised up, or created, to express what the people themselves could not quite attain, now it became an artificial product manufactured for the pleasure of princes or captains of commerce and industry by highly trained specialists. As all standards were lowered under a progressive industrialism it became less and less distinguished and its force turned to weakness. By 1820 architecture and sculpture were dead, painting and poetry and drama lingered on almost to the very end of the century and music is now completing its fall. From 1875 to the outbreak of the war, confusion, eclecticism and a kind of anarchical individualism obtained, while industrial society was perfecting that imperialism of *force without righteousness* against which the world is now in arms.

Consider the architecture of the period since the Centennial and see how perfectly this chaos, this disunity, this lack of conviction expresses itself in the Romanesque and Colonial, French Renaissance and Gothic modes of tentative design. Anarchy has followed order, and it is now a question whether this, as it shows itself in the architecture of the last generation, is reminiscent of the XIX century or prophetic of the remainder of the XX.

We who work ardently and foolhardily to restore Gothic to life and to use it to express some of the eternal verities in the world, such as religion, do so less because we consider it supremely beautiful than because we know what it meant and what it expressed. We would restore the style and the method, but only that the civilization itself may also be restored after the great

